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ABSTRACT

Based on research by the Migrant Education Secondary Assistance (MESA) project, this report presents final recommendations for the improvement of migrant student graduation rates and secondary education. The strongest areas of need revealed in MESA findings were: (1) better identification and recruitment of secondary migrant students and dropouts; (2) increased services to migrant dropouts; (3) more interstate, intrastate, and interprogram coordination and cooperation to benefit migrant youth; (4) greater facilitation of credit transfer and access to credit-earning opportunities; (5) more work-study programs; (6) greater advocacy for secondary level migrant issues within the public school system and the community; (7) greater involvement of the whole family in education; (8) development of a policy to avoid grade retention; and (9) greater flexibility in programming and scheduling. Several specific recommendations accompany discussion of each area of need. This pamphlet contains descriptions of other MESA publications. (SV)

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

FINAL REPORT OF THE

MIGRANT EDUCATION SECONDARY ASSISTANCE PROJECT

DECEMBER 1989

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS
FINAL REPORT of the Migrant Education Secondary Assistance Project
December 1989

MESA Project completes secondary studies, prepares recommendations

The Migrant Education Secondary Assistance (MESA) project was designed to examine various aspects of the secondary level of Migrant Education including current practices, characteristics, dropout retrieval, and credit accrual and acceptance. MESA was an eighteen-month contract of the United States Department of Education with the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Compensatory Education. The BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center was sub-contracted to complete some of the tasks.

Future Directions culminates recommendations for the improvement of migrant student graduation rates and secondary education based on MESA research.

Each state Migrant Education office has been provided with a set of MESA products. Additional copies are available by calling the toll-free hotline number at 1-800-245-5681 (outside New York State), 1-800-245-5680 (within New York State), or by mailing the form included in this report.

MESA RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were selected as priorities based on the strongest areas of need revealed in MESA findings.

- Better identification and recruitment of secondary migrant students and dropouts

Secondary students and dropouts are not identified as consistently as younger migrant students. Recent MSRTS data revealed that there were 29,075 currently migrant students in 7th and 8th grades during 1987-88 regular term as compared to 34,441 in grades 9-12. Thus, the 7th and 8th grade population represents 84.4% of the totals in the next four grades. This steady decline in students is indicative of an increased dropout rate and may also signify a lack of identification of older students. Though some of these students may not want Migrant Education services or to be identified as migrants among their peers, they should still be identified in order to be offered the option.

A need for improved identification and recruitment is indicated in many states where the number of secondary migrant students who were actually served as reported by Performance Report data is a low percentage of those expected to be served. The range was from less than 2% to 220% with an average of 73%.

An analysis of recent MSRTS data shows that summer enrollment is less than 20% of that shown for regular term. This may indicate a need for more intensive summer identification and recruitment as well as more extensive and varied summer programs.

Specific recommendations include: 1) year-round recruiters, 2) use of the family form on the Certificate of Eligibility (COE) to facilitate identification of all children in the family, and 3) greater emphasis on identification of dropouts and collection of data in order to advocate services to them.

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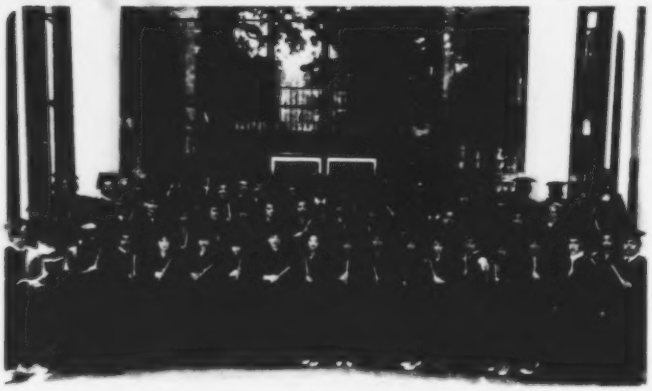

University of Houston HEP

• Increased services to migrant dropouts

With high school graduation as the overall goal of Migrant Education, the high dropout rate among migrant youth must be of paramount concern. Despite great improvements during the last decade, the rate remains significantly higher than that of the general population. Even though at present the number of retrieval programs is limited, nationally a movement is underway to provide additional services for high school dropouts. Migrant Education legislation mandating service to migrant dropout youth up to age 22 correlates with this national initiative.

Migrant Education needs to provide or facilitate the development of more alternative programs, such as home-study, HEPs (High School Equivalency Programs which provide opportunities to earn high school diplomas or G.E.D.s), pre-G.E.D. programs for youth with less than an eighth grade reading level, career education and expanded residential programs. Funding should be augmented by outside sources. Dropouts need to be provided with comprehensive services.

Specific recommendations for dropouts include: 1) informational bulletins or newsletters, 2) regular communication through telephone or home visits, 3) that contact people be equipped with information concerning educational, career and human needs options, 4) that assessment and instruction be provided in the area of life survival skills, 5) that assessment and academic instruction be provided in order to help dropouts prepare for re-entry into schools and other academic programs or the G.E.D.

• More inter/intrastate and interprogram/ interagency coordination and cooperation to benefit migrant youth

By necessity, Migrant Education has been a leader in inter/intrastate coordination. A large percentage of Migrant Education's previously funded Section 143 projects, which were mandated to provide inter/intrastate coordination, had a focus on secondary migrant students. Improved coordination can inform more migrant educators of the unique and creative programs that have proven effective for serving migrant youth on the secondary level. Migrant educators are still often not aware of some of the successful methods used within their migrant stream or across the country. At a first level, inter/intrastate cooperation can mean greater awareness among migrant educators of programs outside their home areas. Coordination must, however, go beyond the awareness level to build upon an inter/intrastate team concept for the development of new initiatives for more effective programming.

In an era of fiscal constraints and mandates for increased services, Migrant Educators must look beyond the traditional Migrant Education funds to serve the youth comprehensively. Coordination efforts must be expanded to include interprogram and interagency linkages at the federal, state and local levels.

Specific recommendations: 1) Coordination projects should focus on lateral, multidirectional coordination and communication among states and local programs as opposed to a vertical dissemination model. Universities should be tapped for necessary research.

2)nter/intrastate coordination projects should provide lateral teaming and staff development among program level migrant educator peers to promote development and sharing of effective programs and less "reinventing of the wheel." 3) Migrant Education must seek to promote coordination with outside programs and agencies by acknowledging and rewarding such activities.

- More facilitation of credit transfer and access to credit-earning opportunities

Many migrant students lack sufficient credit to graduate due to late entry/early withdrawal, a shortage of the courses required at their designated school of graduation, and other factors. Migrant educators should fully utilize the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) to assure that credits are recorded. During the 1987-88 regular term, 22% of currently migrant students with enrollments in two or more school districts had full or partial credit appearing on their MSRTS records. Summer term currently migrant students with two or more enrollments showed virtually no full or partial credit.

Migrant students need a credit make-up system to allow them to compensate for lost credits without adding additional years of schooling. The Portable Assisted Study Sequence (P.A.S.S.) program is an effective method of earning credit that is presently offered in about half the states in varying degrees.

Specific recommendations: 1) Migrant educators should fully use the secondary section of the MSRTS record, giving priority to secondary students who move. 2) The P.A.S.S. program should be made available in all states as a means of supplementing during the regular and/or summer terms or by offering credit opportunities while the student is in transit. 3) Interstate coordination for acceptance of credits among districts and development and improvement of the P.A.S.S. program should be promoted.

Photo by Roger Smith

- More work-study programs

A migrant student's need to work to help support the family often interferes with high school completion. Even though the desire to get an education is there, a student's obligation to assist the family financially cannot be overlooked.

Work-study programs are a proven and effective means of dropout prevention. Programs should reinforce basic skills, provide challenging work experiences, involve higher level skills, problem solving and career education, as well as positive reinforcement and successful experiences for students. During the 1987-88 regular and summer terms, approximately 10% of the states reported work-study programs.

Specific recommendations: 1) Work-study programs should be an essential component of Migrant Education secondary school and dropout services. 2) Work-study should be funded with Migrant funds and a combination of other public and private sources. 3) Work-study programs must expose youth to challenging career and work opportunities, with the first objective to be the education of the child.

- Greater advocacy for secondary level migrant issues

Migrant staff need to work as ambassadors to the public school system and the community to communicate the special characteristics and needs of minority secondary youth and to promote quality services and high expectations for them.

Specific recommendations include: 1) systematic training of teachers and administrators in higher teacher expectations, using the Teacher Expectation Student Achievement (TESA) program or an equivalent training approach, 2) that as a result of higher teacher expectations students not be tracked into general curriculum or other programs that make college an improbability, 3) that a student advisor or advocate be assigned to serve all high school students and dropouts at the local level, 4) that training and advocacy be provided to promote a culturally sensitive school environment, 5) that migrant and district staff reflect the culture of the students, 6) that interstate coordination projects as well as state and local programs promote greater coordination with post-secondary institutions to increase the enrollment and retention of migrant students in colleges and universities.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS: MESA Final Report
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Future Directions is published by the Migrant Education Secondary Assistance (MESA) project in partial fulfillment of a United States Department of Education contract with the Florida State Department of Education, Bureau of Compensatory Education.

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of either the United States Department of Education or the Florida State Department of Education.

- Greater involvement of the whole family in education

The education of any youth cannot take place in a vacuum, isolated from family support. Though many migrant parents have low educational attainments, they would like to have their children receive the educational opportunities they never had.

Migrant educators and youth have repeatedly attributed youth's educational success to positive family support. Migrant Education must foster greater family involvement and take a whole family approach to education. By being provided with educational and support services for the whole family, parents realize more than ever the value of education in their children's lives. Early intervention can enable parents to set high expectations for their children and offer them the encouragement to finish high school and aim for college.

Programs should be sensitive to cultural differences...

A model which takes a comprehensive approach to involving the whole family, La Familia programs, based in Arizona and California, coordinate efforts to serve migrant families through identifying educational and social service needs.

Specific recommendations: 1) Programs should be sensitive to cultural differences, realizing the potential for cultural conflict between home and school values. 2) Programs must recognize and reinforce in the educational process the cultural strengths and values, the merits of bilingualism in today's society. 3) Migrant staff must be cautious that efforts to provide parent education do not imply to parents that they are at fault for the differences in expectations at home and at school.

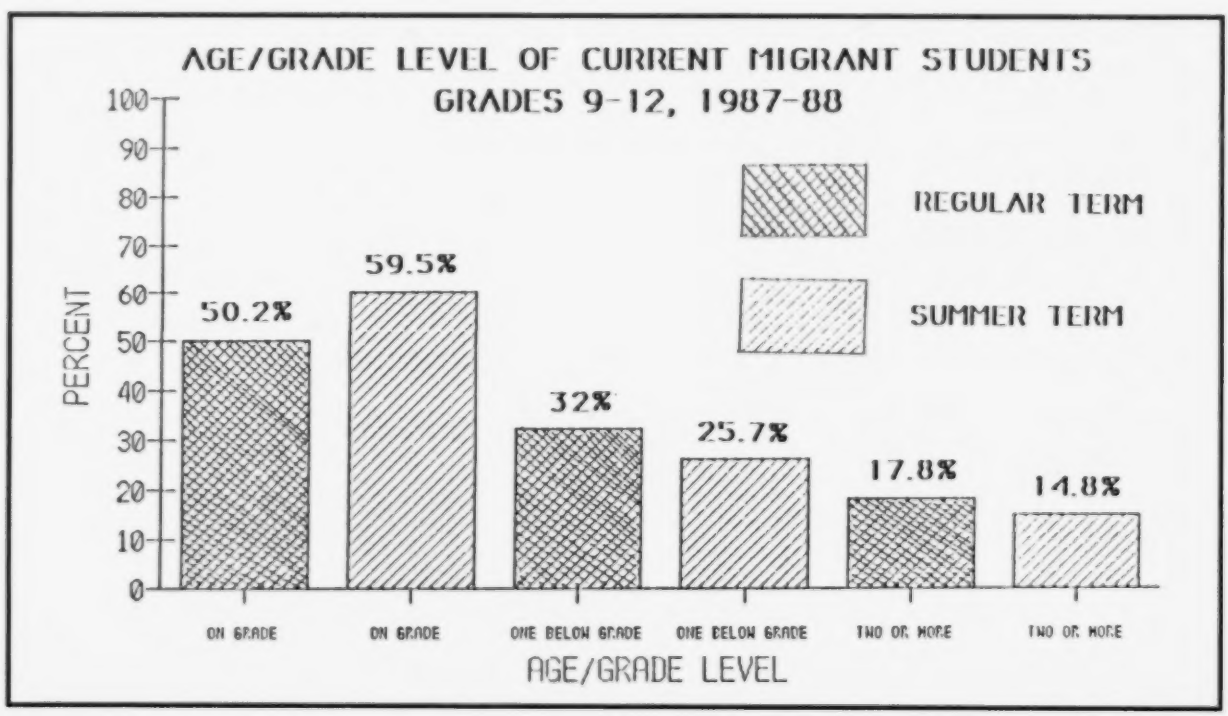
- Development of a policy to avoid grade retention

Being overage for grade level is the primary indicator of dropping out. Grade retention increases the chances of dropping out by 40-50% for one year, and by 90% for two or more years. In many areas as many as 50% of migrant kindergartners are retained and some are sent home to spend another year maturing. The Grade Retention and Placement Evaluation (GRAPE) project revealed that by second grade, 50% of migrants nationally were already below grade level as compared to 19% of the general population. MSRTS data from 1987-88 substantiate GRAPE findings. MSRTS data indicate that 50% of currently migrant students in grades 9-12 were below grade level and thus potential dropouts.

Grade retention often takes on a punitive nature. Whatever benefits a child may derive from being held back a grade are soon overridden by a loss of self-esteem, a sense of personal failure, and the negative effects on the student's social development.

Specific recommendations: 1) Migrant educators must be well informed on grade retention research and assertive in advocating against retention. 2) Migrant parents should be well informed as to the educational liabilities of retention. 3) Migrant Education needs to have better coordination between schools to ensure that students are placed appropriately when they move to a new school district, not penalized because they are unknown. 4)Policies should be developed that avoid grade retention so that students remain on grade level from the start. 5) Migrant educators should develop a variety of options for extra assistance to students in danger of retention so that they will be promoted. 6) A student's being "over-age" for his/her grade should be used as a criterion to indicate a need for services.

(Recommendations continued on page 8)



MESA products now available

MESA Bulletins

Eight bi-monthly MESA Bulletins inform secondary migrant educators and counselors of current issues on the secondary level, publications, dropout retrieval programs, and migrant experts' recommendations for meeting secondary students' educational needs.

Characteristics of Migrant Secondary Students: Outreach Report

The report summarizes the migrant youth panel discussion and MESA work sessions on home and family influences, school characteristics, and recommendations which were held at the New York State Migrant Education Conference in Silver Bay.

Exploring Mobility Issues: Outreach Report

The report highlights the panel discussion on interstate mobility and summarizes student, institutional, and national/interstate issues, and recommendations from the work sessions held at the McAllen, Texas outreach meeting.

Current Practices: Future Directions: Outreach Report

This report summarizes information gained from sessions held at the National Migrant Education Conference in Portland, Oregon on current practices and new trends in migrant secondary education, school-related suggestions for program improvement, and burning issues related to the field.

State and Local Activity Overview

These state profiles highlight information from the 1986-87 and 1987-88 state plans, state evaluations, and other sources to include a state's Migrant Education program organization, unique secondary programs, summaries of secondary program activities, secondary components, staff development, needs assessment, demographic information, and sources. An abridged version, as well as the complete version, has been compiled. Each state Migrant Education office has been provided with a copy of the State and Local Activity Overview. Additional copies are not available at this time.

HEP/CAMP Programs Directory

This report includes detailed program descriptions, eligibility requirements, and contact persons for the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) and High School Equivalency Program (HEP).

Characteristics of Secondary Migrant Youth

This report synthesizes some of the latest data from MESA outreach meetings, migrant experts' interviews, and MSRTS analysis as well as recent information from migrant and non-migrant sources to examine success factors leading to higher graduation rates.

At-Risk Youth: An Annotated Bibliography for Migrant Educators

The annotated bibliography includes many of the current migrant and non-migrant publications that emphasize success factors involved in secondary education.

MESA National MSRTS Executive Summary

This report examines recent MSRTS data to show national trends in secondary student enrollment, mobility and school interruptions, selected secondary information, and below grade level enrollment.

Interstate Secondary Credit Accrual and Acceptance Manual

The manual gives Migrant Education personnel and non-migrant staff background on MSRTS credit acceptance and accrual procedures, and the rationale for using MSRTS.

Dropout Retrieval Programs

Detailed profiles of fifteen migrant and non-migrant dropout retrieval programs that could potentially be replicated for the migrant population illustrate a variety of components, formats, program services, eligibility requirements, sponsoring institutions or agencies, funding sources, identification and recruitment methods, student profiles, and contact persons.

Dropout Retrieval Programs Summary

This report, available in English and Spanish versions, gives brief descriptions of the fifteen dropout retrieval programs mentioned above.

Dropout Retrieval Report: Thoughts on Dropout Prevention and Retrieval

Thirteen migrant educators from around the country were interviewed for their ideas and recommendations on the improvement of secondary Migrant Education services. The report contains these interviews plus a narrative including a summary of recent research and experts' recommendations.

Please send copies of the following MESA products.

_____ MESA Bulletins 2-8 (State numbers: _____)
_____ Characteristics of Migrant Secondary Students: Outreach Report
_____ Exploring Mobility Issues: Outreach Report
_____ Current Practices: Future Directions: Outreach Report
_____ HEP/CAMP Programs Directory
_____ Characteristics of Secondary Migrant Youth Report
_____ At Risk Youth: An Annotated Bibliography for Migrant Educators
_____ MESA National MSRTS Executive Summary
_____ Interstate Secondary Credit Accrual and Acceptance Manual
_____ Dropout Retrieval Programs
_____ Dropout Retrieval Programs Summary (Indicate English or Spanish)
_____ Dropout Retrieval Report: Thoughts on Dropout Prevention and Retrieval

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MESA Recommendations

(continued from page 5)

- More versatility in programming and scheduling

More migrant students will graduate if they have the opportunity to study and earn credit at more convenient times than the traditional school system offers. Analysis of recent MSRTS data shows that summer enrollment is less than twenty percent of that of regular term. The same data show that a larger percentage of those students who enrolled in summer term were on grade level. Such innovative programs as Florida's Summer Institute have demonstrated the effectiveness of alternative scheduling.

Photo by Roger Smith

Specific recommendations: *1) Migrant Education must become truly supplemental at the secondary level by using after-school, evening, summer and weekend programming. 2) Home-study packets, such as those used in California, New York, and Pennsylvania, must be available in all states to provide another option for summer enrichment and credit make-up. 3) Programs must be offered throughout the summer months at hours that are convenient to the students rather than the staff. 4) Migrant programs must always be open to late-arriving migrant students; there should be no cutoff due to mobility.*

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